

2021-2022 Community Influenza Surveillance Report Update of Current Status May 11th, 2022

Overall Assessment

Although influenza activity has increased in London and Middlesex County over the past several weeks, compared to previous years, the activity overall remains at or slightly below what is expected at this time of year during a typical influenza season. Nearly two thirds of public health regions in Ontario continue to report localized or sporadic influenza A activity. So far this season, there have been 619 confirmed influenza cases reported in Ontario (610 influenza A, nine influenza B).

Analysis and Action

Even though Ontario is well into this year's influenza season, the Health Unit continues to encourage London and Middlesex County residents to get their seasonal influenza vaccine as soon as they can.

Regardless of the level of local influenza activity, there are a number of easy-to-follow steps residents can take to avoid becoming sick throughout the year. Washing your hands frequently with soap and warm water for 15-20 seconds or using a waterless hand sanitizer (with at least 70 percent alcohol content), remains an effective way to prevent many illnesses, including influenza. As the pandemic continues, local residents are also advised to continue following these COVID-19 prevention practices:

- Cough or sneeze into your elbow,
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth,
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces, such as doorknobs, handrails, countertops, etc. frequently,
- Stay home when feeling sick, and
- Even with the lifting of Ontario's masking requirement, the Health Unit continues to recommend wearing a mask in enclosed public places where physical distancing cannot be maintained. Where possible, the Health Unit also recommends maintaining a physical distance of at least two metres (six feet) from people who are not part of your household.

Details of Current Local Activity

Between May 1st and May 7th, there were five laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza A and no cases of influenza B reported to the Middlesex-London Health Unit. This increases the total number of influenza A cases reported since surveillance began on August 29th, 2021 to 32.

Appendix A provides more detail about laboratory-based influenza activity indicators for the current reporting week, as well as other local indicators of respiratory illness.

Provincial and National Comparison

In this week's *Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin*, Public Health Ontario reports that influenza activity in health units across the province was higher than the previous week. In the most recent week, 111 confirmed cases of influenza A and one confirmed case of influenza B were reported in Ontario. This is higher than the 90 cases reported across Ontario in the previous week. PHO has issued an alert indicating that seasonal activity for influenza A and influenza B has started.

In this week's *FluWatch* and *Respiratory Virus Report*, the Public Health Agency of Canada noted that detections of influenza across the country have increased since February, and markedly so since April. During the last week of April, influenza activity was above the seasonal threshold of 5% positivity, marking the beginning of the influenza season at the national level.

- The latest *Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin*, issued by Public Health Ontario (PHO), is available at <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/data-and-analysis/commonly-used-products/respiratory-pathogens-weekly>
- The latest *FluWatch* report, issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), is available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza/influenza-surveillance/weekly-influenza-reports.html>
- The latest *Respiratory Virus Report* issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), is available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/surveillance/respiratory-virus-detections-canada.html>

Appendix A

Summary of Community Influenza Surveillance Indicators for Middlesex-London May 1st to May 7th, 2022

Table 1: Summary of laboratory-based influenza activity indicators, Middlesex-London and Ontario, 2021-2022 influenza surveillance season

Indicator	Reporting Period	Number Reported: <i>Current Reporting Period</i>	Number Reported: <i>Year to Date</i> <i>(from August 29, 2021)</i>	Recent Trends
Laboratory-confirmed cases ^{1, 4}	May 1-7 (week 18) ²	Influenza A – 5 cases Influenza B – 0 cases	Influenza A – 32 cases Influenza B – 0 cases	Influenza A: Lower than the previous week (Apr. 24-30) when six cases were reported. Influenza B: Same as the previous week (Apr. 24-30) when no cases were reported.
Influenza sub-types ¹	May 1-7	Influenza A (H3) – 0 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 5 cases	Influenza A (H3) – 7 cases Influenza A not yet subtyped – 25 cases	N/A
Hospitalizations ^{1, 5}	May 1-7	2	10	Higher than the previous week (Apr. 24-30) when one hospitalization was reported.
Deaths ^{1, 5}	May 1-7	0	0	Same as the previous week (Apr. 24-30) when no deaths were reported.
Influenza outbreaks in long-term care homes/retirement homes/acute care	May 1-7	Influenza A – 0 outbreaks Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Influenza A – 1 outbreak Influenza B – 0 outbreaks	Lower than the previous week (Apr. 24-30) when one outbreaks were reported.
Percentage of samples that are positive for influenza (Ontario) ³	Apr. 24–30 (week 17) ²	Influenza A – 4% positivity Influenza B – 0% positivity	N/A	Influenza A: Higher than 1.8% positivity reported the previous week (Apr. 17–23). Influenza B: Same to 0% positivity reported the previous week (Apr. 17–23).

Notes:

1 Numbers are subject to change week by week due to the retrospective nature of reporting.

2 Weekly influenza monitoring often uses numbered weeks from 1 to 52 weeks per year. A reference week calendar can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza/influenza-surveillance/fluwatch-weeks-calendar.html>

3 Public Health Ontario, [Ontario Respiratory Pathogen Bulletin](#) 2021-2022. Numbers reported represent results submitted to CIRID from 17 participating labs in Ontario and does not include all testing laboratories, [ORPB Interactive Website Data Caveats and Glossary](#)

4 The week cases are reported to the Health Unit may not be the same as week of illness onset.

5 The week hospitalizations and deaths are reported to the Health Unit may not be the same as the week in which they occurred, or the same as the week of illness onset.

Table 2: Summary of community-based respiratory illness indicators, Middlesex-London, 2021-2022 influenza surveillance season

Indicator	Reporting Period	Number Reported: <i>Current Reporting Period</i>	Recent Trends
Middlesex-London hospital emergency department visits - percentage of patients with respiratory or fever symptoms¹	May 1-7	An average of 9.5% of patients presented with respiratory symptoms. An average of 3.7% of patients presented with influenza-like illness (fever) symptoms.	Slightly Higher than 8.5% reported the previous week (Apr. 24-30). Slightly Higher than 3.0% reported the previous week (Apr. 24-30).
Real-time Viral Respiratory Surveillance² - Middlesex-London	May 1-7	Activity/Risk Level: Moderate or Yellow (Increased visit volumes to Emergency Departments and absenteeism may be noted).	Higher level, than Low (or Green) as reported the previous week (Apr. 24-30).

¹ [Acute Care Enhanced Surveillance](#) (ACES) Application is a real-time syndromic surveillance system. This source will be influenced by COVID-19 activity.

² [Viral Respiratory Mapper](#) uses data from ACES (above). Activity/Risk Levels range from Green, Yellow, Orange and Red.

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